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Walters wants West told of Soviets' SDI

By Bill Gertz
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U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Vernon Walters yesterday called for a major campaign to educate Western nations about Soviet strategic space defense efforts, and noted the Soviets are "terrified" of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative.

"They think it's either here or almost here," said Mr. Walters of the Soviets' belief that the SDI program is "very close" to development and not a defense program for the 1990s.

Mr. Walters, a veteran diplomat, made his remarks in a wide-ranging foreign policy discussion with reporters and editors of The Washington Times.

Mr. Walters, 68, who received his United Nations post earlier this year, described the imbalance in conven-

tional forces between the United States and the Soviet Union as an important defense rationale for the SDI program.

He is confident the West can provide an adequate defense "because we know that the creative genius of a free society will give us the technical means to keep that society free," he said.

"One of the things I think we have to get out is what the Soviets have been doing in the field of SDI, and what will happen if they get there first," Mr. Walters said. He called for briefings on Soviet space weapons efforts.

Mr. Walters said the Soviet space defense efforts were already "far along" during his tenure with the CIA more than a decade ago.

A CIA working paper on Soviet space weapons programs last March revealed that the Soviet Union has undertaken major directed-energy weapons programs since the early 1970s. It concludes that by the late 1980s, the Soviet Union could have prototypes of laser weapons for use against satellites and ballistic missiles and could deploy operational anti-satellite laser systems in the 1990s.

Mr. Walters said he believes the Soviet Union has come to realize the United States will not give up its SDI program in negotiations or in the summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The two leaders are scheduled to meet in Geneva this November.

"Nobody throws away the only trump they've developed in twenty years," he said of the SDI program.

Mr. Walters said that before he accepted the United Nations post he

told the White House that he would need the same rank as his predecessor, Jeane Kirkpatrick, in order to be effective. The White House assured him, in writing, that his position was exactly the same as that of Mrs. Kirkpatrick, he said.

Mr. Walters said that he, like Mrs. Kirkpatrick, is neither a member of the National Security Council or a member of the National Security Planning Group, but is often asked to attend.

Mr. Walters began his career in 1941 as a U.S. Army second lieutenant and retired as a lieutenant general. During that time he served as an adviser to Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, and former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig. From 1972 to 1976 he was deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Before his nomination as U.N. ambassador, Mr. Walters served the Reagan administration as senior adviser to Secretary of State Haig and an ambassador-at-large.

At the United Nations, Mr. Walters said he has taken a different tactical

approach to diplomacy than Mrs. Kirkpatrick. He has concentrated his efforts on trying to break up the "unnatural, incestuous solidarity" of delegates from underdeveloped countries which reflexively support Soviet policies, he said.

On the conflict in Central America, Mr. Walters said "we're going to win" and defended U.S. support for resistance fighters in Nicaragua.

Mr. Walters described South Africa's apartheid racial policy as "belonging to the thirteenth century," but said the United States should be careful not to allow South Africa to become a Marxist dictatorship.

He described the language used by the U.N. representative of South Africa's African National Congress as the "most vicious anti-American rhetoric" he has heard in United Nations discourse, "more violent than from any other African country."

"And it was all couched in perfectly recognizable communist jargon," Mr. Walters said.